



Trinity College

HARTFORD CONNECTICUT

Dear members of the Commerce Committee, I am writing in strong opposition of the minimal arts funding levels in the Governor's proposed FY24-25 budget for Conservation and Development Agencies.

I am Eric Galm, Professor of Music and Ethnomusicology, Chair of the Music Department, and Co-Director of the Center for Caribbean Studies at Trinity College. I would like to thank you for recognizing funding for the arts, and the important relationship between tourism, arts, and culture. I encourage you to think broadly about how the arts help to build more vibrant cities and towns, attract and retain top-notch talent, and build a productive and dynamic workforce. It is important to know that arts and education help people develop critical thinking strategies so that they can become independent, expressive, and comprehensive individuals. This important work cannot take place with the insufficient proposed funding for 2024-2025. It is certainly not a step forward if arts funding is returned to 2019 levels, which was inadequate even at that moment in time. In 2019, Connecticut only invested \$1.11 per capita for Arts, Culture, and Tourism funding, an allocation that was dwarfed by neighboring Rhode Island (\$5.05), New York (\$3.07), and Massachusetts (\$1.65). In 2021 Connecticut increased arts funding to \$1.53 per capita, but again, continued to lag far behind Rhode Island, New Jersey, and New York (\$2.30), and Massachusetts (\$2.64). We can't continue to play catch-up with our peers, and we certainly can't go back to previous funding levels by funding less, while they continue to offer more.

The Connecticut Arts Alliance, Connecticut Humanities, and the Connecticut Tourism Coalition have collaboratively worked together to develop a Connecticut Arts, Culture, and Tourism Roadmap, which can help our state legislators to navigate adequate funding levels and apply these resources towards a sound investment in our state's workforce and economic landscape. This roadmap helps to make Connecticut a more attractive place to visit, work, and live, by distributing resources and equal access to historically under-resourced organizations; supplement these expenditures through metrics and data that demonstrates the value within this investment; and ensuring accountability through the administration of these funds by trusted public and private partners.

As we emerge from the pandemic, I've become more attuned to in-person creative interactions between people and groups. The arts help us to remember our past, where we are in the present, and where we may be headed in the future. I've learned so much about arts and education as I've had to rethink my teaching strategies and reflect upon what happens in the classroom. Recent years of social isolation has reinforced the importance of hands-on musical interchanges among students and their teachers. Within these important moments, students learn how to listen to their own voice, and how it contributes to the overall musical conversation, observing rhythm, dynamics, and collaborative energy, and how their voice can contribute to conversations in their lives beyond the classroom.

As a professor and as an individual artist who received a small grant from the Connecticut Office for the Arts in 2022, I was able to produce and participate in a "Big Bang" drumming encounter here at Trinity College with over 125 official drumming participants, comprised of high schools and community arts organizations from throughout the state, representing African American, Puerto Rican, Trinidadian and West Indian musical cultures, accompanied by an additional 50 individuals in the audience who were provided buckets and sticks to play along with the massive sound. The state assistance provided an impetus for making this moment possible, and it represented one of the first outdoor moments of large group celebration since the onset of the pandemic. It was a joyous celebration! Just this single event brought together several hundred people who took advantage of the sunny day, buying from local food trucks, and stimulating community collaboration from residents of Hartford and the surrounding communities. As a result of state funding initiatives, our special moment, without intentional planning, seamlessly became part of the larger Roadmap Initiative. We united communities from throughout the state, and visitors from Massachusetts are already planning on returning to this event in April 2023.

We need to strengthen our state support for the arts and increase funding so that families, children, and communities can continue to thrive through artistic engagement and collaboration to help build a stronger Connecticut for tomorrow. Your support of the arts helps to ensure that the music and culture of the people of Connecticut will continue to be represented today and in the future. Please propose funding levels that at least make us competitive with funding allocated towards the arts in New York, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island. Thank you for recognizing this important backbone of our cultural and economic landscape.

Sincerely,

Eric A. Galm

Professor of Music and Ethnomusicology/Chair, Department of Music/Co-Director, Center for Caribbean Studies

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